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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002307

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2022

TAGS: PREL MOPS SY IS TU

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE VIOLATION OF TURKISH AIRSPACE BY ISRAEL

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister Babacan has expressed his concern over reports that Israeli warplanes may have violated Turkish airspace near the Turkey-Syria border on September 6.

A full investigation is underway. According to press reports, jettisoned fuel tanks -- allegedly associated with Israeli F-15 aircraft -- were found on Turkish territory in the province of Hatay bordering Syria. Meanwhile, Syrian Foreign Minister Mouallem visited Ankara on September 10, and the press is speculating the visit is tied to the aircraft incident. End summary.

¶2. (C) On September 8, the semi-official Anatolian News Agency reported that the MFA had requested an explanation from Israel after authorities found what appeared to be jettisoned aircraft fuel tanks in the southeastern Turkish province of Hatay, near the Turkey-Syria border. In a September 10 joint press conference with visiting Syrian FM Mouallem, Turkish FM Babacan called the airspace violation an "unacceptable development" and said that a "multilateral investigation" is underway. He confirmed that Turkey has demanded an explanation from Israel. Foreign Ministry officials whom we contacted refused to provide any details on the circumstances surrounding the supposed airspace violation. Israeli diplomats here are also refusing to comment.

¶3. (U) According to reports circulating in the Turkish media, Israeli jets violated Turkish airspace on September 6 while testing Syrian air defenses. TV reporting showed what appeared to be external aircraft fuel tanks found along the Turkey-Syria border, with speculation that the fuel tanks are associated with Israeli F-15 warplanes.

¶4. (C) We will provide a read-out of Mouallem's meetings via septel.

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WILSON